

4.1 AESTHETICS

This section analyzes the Tuolumne County General Plan Update's potential impacts with respect to aesthetics. Specifically, changes in visual character, impacts to scenic vistas, and impacts related to light and glare are discussed.

4.1.1 Setting

a. Visual Character. The visual character within the unincorporated County is predominantly rural, as shown in the photographs in Figure 4.1-1, with dispersed small-town communities surrounded by open expanses consisting of agriculture, native vegetation, and low-density residential development. Natural features strongly contribute to this visual landscape. The spectacular topographic diversity of Tuolumne County, ranging from the mountainous landscape and steep canyons of the High Sierras in the east (see Photo 4 in Figure 4.1-1) to the foothills and gently undulating plains in the west (see photos 1 through 3), adds visual interest. Deep river canyons are cut into the western slope of the Sierra Nevada in Tuolumne County. In their upper reaches in the higher Sierra, rivers and glacial sculpturing have carved massive granite cliffs, most prominently seen in Yosemite Valley. Native vegetation and tree cover are important ingredients in the visual character of Stanislaus National Forest and Yosemite National Park in the eastern portion of the County as well as in agricultural rangeland.

Prominent water resources also contribute to the rural visual character of Tuolumne County, including rivers, streams, creeks, lakes, and large reservoirs. Lake Don Pedro, New Melones Reservoir, Lake Tulloch to the west and the Hetch Hetchy, Beardsley, Lyon's and Pinecrest reservoirs in the eastern County are important water features. Connecting these lakes and reservoirs are the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Clavey Rivers with their deep canyons and steep cliffs. Flowing through the County are numerous lushly vegetated streams and creeks such as Sullivan Creek and Curtis Creek among many others which contribute to the County's visual character.

The visual character of urban communities in Tuolumne County is influenced by surrounding natural features as well as their built environments. The Red Hills provide a serpentine backdrop to Chinese Camp, limestone outcrops and remnant marble deposits are scattered throughout Columbia, and the lava cliffs of Table Mountain are visible from Jamestown and Columbia. Within the built environment, individual historic structures and entire historic districts, as discussed in Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*, may have visual appeal as living examples of the Gold Rush era, other periods of the County's history, and a diverse set of architectural styles. (Refer to Figure 4.1-2 for photographs of exemplary historic structures and sites and to Section 4.5, *Cultural Resources*, for a more detailed discussion of historic resources.) Other visually important examples of the built environment include bridges or overpasses, landscaped roadways, and locations where historic events occurred.

b. Scenic Vistas. While scenic views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains are prevalent across much of Tuolumne County, principal travel corridors are important to an analysis of scenic vistas because they define the vantage point for the largest number of viewers. These travel corridors include scenic roadways, primarily, as well as Wild and Scenic Rivers.



Photo 1: Eastward view of Sierra Nevada foothills from historic schoolhouse near Columbia.



Photo 2: View of mature oak trees and grazing lands along Jamestown Road.



Photo 3: View of grazing lands near Chinese Camp.



Photo 4: Rim of the World vista point overlooking the Tuolumne River on State Route 120, one year after the Rim Fire. (Photo Credit: Nerds for Nature - Flickr)

Visual Character of the Rural Environment

Figure 4.1-1

Tuolumne County





Photo 1: A Gold Rush-era store in Columbia State Historic Park.



Photo 2: A brick public schoolhouse in Columbia State Historic Park.



Photo 3: The Emporium building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, on Main Street in Jamestown.



Photo 4: A convenience store at Chinese Camp on State Route 49.

Visual Character of the Built Environment

Figure 4.1-2

Tuolumne County

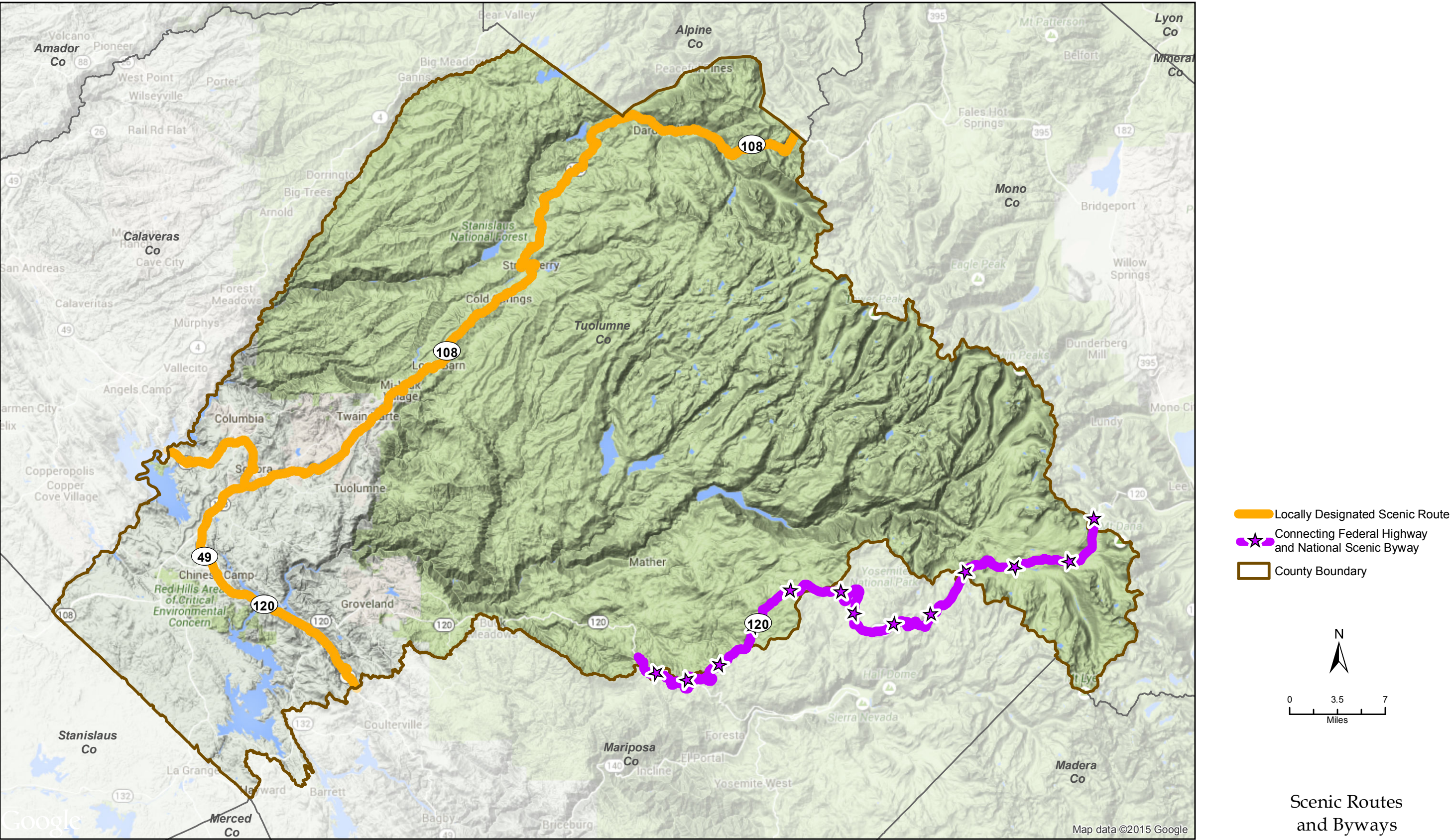
Scenic Roadways. Roads and highways in Tuolumne County traverse areas of great scenic beauty, offering enjoyable experiences for passing motorists, cyclists, and hikers. Portions of State Routes (SR) 49, 108 and 120 are eligible for designation as State Scenic Highways (Caltrans, 2013). Although the County does not currently have any officially designated State Scenic Highways, the existing Tuolumne County Circulation Element identifies portions of SR 49, 108, and 120 to be locally designated scenic routes, as shown in Figure 4.1-3. The status of a state scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a Scenic Highway.

SR 49. This highway traverses the western foothills and Mother Lode and connects many historical sites and towns. As shown by Photo 1 in Figure 4.1-4, typical views from SR 49 consist of agricultural rangeland on rolling hills. According to the County's existing Circulation Element and Natural Resources Element, SR 49 is a locally designated scenic route from the Mariposa County line to Route 120 near Moccasin Creek, and from Route 120 at Chinese Camp to the Calaveras County line, exclusive of the City of Sonora. This section of SR 49 also is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway (Caltrans, 2013).

SR 108. The portion of SR 108 from SR 49 near the City of Sonora easterly to the Mono County line is a locally designated scenic route, part of the Sonora Pass Highway, and eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway (Tuolumne County, 1996; Caltrans, 2013). This route leads northeasterly from the Central Valley into the historic gold mining communities of Jamestown and Sonora. Views consist of long stretches of grassy plains, to flat top buttes, to the foothills that eventually reach the mountain roads with views into the Stanislaus National Forest. Photo 2 in Figure 4.1-4 shows representative views of forested hills near the community of Twain Harte.

SR 120. From SR 49 near Chinese Camp easterly to SR 49 near Moccasin Creek, SR 120 is a locally designated scenic route and is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway (Tuolumne County, 1996; Caltrans, 2013). Don Pedro Reservoir can be viewed from this particular stretch of SR 120. In addition, SR 120 is a connecting Federal Highway and National Scenic Byway throughout Yosemite National Park that offers a spectacular passage over the Sierra Nevada. The byway also traverses through Sierra National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, and Inyo National Forest. Views include towering granite peaks, pristine lakes, wildflower-covered meadows, and lush evergreen forests with Giant Sequoia groves.

Although the County has many areas of scenic beauty, there are only three vista points officially designated by Caltrans. These vista points are located on SR 120 at post miles (PM) 19, 21 and 44. PM 19 and 21 can be found at Don Pedro Lake, and PM 44 "Rim of the World" overlooks the canyon containing the South Fork of the Tuolumne River. The Rim Fire of 2013, which burned approximately 400 square miles, has altered the scenic character of this overlook by reducing the amount of vegetative cover (see Photo 4 in Figure 4.1-1).



Imagery provided by Google and its licensors © 2015. Additional baselayer data from Caltrans, California Scenic Highway Program, December 2013; Tuolumne County, Circulation Element, December 1996.

Scenic Routes
and Byways

Figure 4.1-3

Tuolumne County



Photo 1: Eastward view of grazing lands along State Route 49/Montezuma Road.



Photo 2: Eastward view on State Route 108 toward the community of Twain Harte.



Wild and Scenic Rivers. The National Park Service has designated a portion of the Tuolumne River as a Wild and Scenic River Corridor. Pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a designated river has outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs), or unique characteristics that make it worthy of special protection. The Tuolumne River is an important visual resource that draws tourists to the area for recreational opportunities within designated Wilderness in Yosemite National Park and Stanislaus National Forest.

A glacially carved, snow-capped landscape, through which the Tuolumne River alternately meanders across wide meadows and cascades down steep canyons, creates magnificent scenery with a unique character with the following notable scenic views:

- The largest glacier on the western flank of the Sierra Nevada is part of the high-country views from the Lyell Fork;
- Views along the Lyell Fork, Dana Fork, and Tuolumne Meadows encompass the meandering river, adjacent meadows, glacially carved domes, and rugged mountain peaks;
- Views within the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne include steep canyon walls, hanging valleys, and cascades of falling water; and
- The stretch of river below Hetch Hetchy Reservoir offers stunning views of fertile meadows, a glacially carved bedrock valley, large river pools, dramatic canyon walls, and a constricted slot canyon.

c. Light and Glare. There are two primary sources of light intrusion: 1) light emanating from structural interiors and passing through windows; and 2) light from exterior sources, such as street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, traffic headlights, and landscape lighting. Uses such as residences, hospitals, and hotels are considered light-sensitive since they are typically occupied by persons who have expectations for privacy during evening hours and who are subject to disturbance by bright light sources. Glare results mainly from sunlight reflection off flat building surfaces with glass and reflective metal surfaces typically contributing to the highest degree of reflectivity.

At night, light pollution is present in and around the County; however, light pollution is primarily confined to urban communities, as the vast majority of the County consists of agricultural, natural resource conservation, and open space uses. Specific sources of nighttime illumination include streetlights and vehicular lights associated with roadways, as well as commercial buildings and residences. Urban lighting associated with the City of Sonora in Tuolumne County also affects nearby unincorporated areas including the community of East Sonora. Glare within the area is created by exterior building materials, surface paving materials, and vehicles traveling or parked on roads and driveways. Any highly reflective facade materials are of particular concern, as buildings reflect sunlight.

d. Regulatory Setting. The County's existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance provide the framework for evaluating potential aesthetic impacts and preserving its visual resources.

1996 General Plan. The 1996 General Plan provides the main regulatory framework for addressing aesthetic issues in the County. As the proposed project would update the 1996 General Plan, this document will be discussed in the context of the update within the impact

analysis. The Community Identity Element and the Scenic Resources Section of the Natural Resources Element includes policy statements to conserve scenic vistas, preserve buffer areas of open space around communities, and enhance the visual quality of urban communities. The community plans for Jamestown, Columbia, East Sonora, and Tuolumne contain similar policies to protect visual resources. As discussed above, the Circulation Element identifies sections of SR 49, 108, and 120 as locally designated scenic routes.

Ordinance Code. The Tuolumne County Ordinance Code implements the General Plan by establishing setbacks, parking and sign standards, building height limits, and building densities. Chapter 17.46 of the Ordinance Code requires design review for all land development projects located within a Design Review Combining (:D) zoning district that require a discretionary entitlement and would result in a change in the appearance of a parcel. The design review process is intended to conserve the County's rural character, scenic built environment, natural environment, and cultural resources. Four Design Review Districts implement this process in Tuolumne County for the communities of Columbia, Jamestown, Tuolumne, and Twain Harte. In addition, the County adopted Design Guidelines in May 2009 for the East Sonora area.

Chapter 17.68 of the Ordinance Code includes the guidelines for issuance of use permits, which allows the Community Resources Director to make a finding that a proposed development is in conformity with the intent and provisions of the ordinance. These guidelines also are intended to protect the public welfare by ensuring that the minimization of adverse effects of a project on surrounding property. They include considerations relative to the health, safety, and general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood. In addition, Chapter 17.68 provides guidelines for approval of site development permits and site review permits to ensure that proposed developments achieve a desirable design.

4.1.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. This evaluation measures the existing visual resource against the proposed action, analyzing the nature of the anticipated change. The County was observed and photographically documented, as was the surrounding area, to assist in the analysis.

According to Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, an impact is considered significant if the project would have:

- 1) *A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;*
- 2) *Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state or city-designated scenic highway;*
- 3) *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or,*
- 4) *Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

The impacts on visual character or quality that would be attributable to the proposed General Plan Update were evaluated relative to existing visual conditions.

b. Project and Cumulative Impacts

Impact AES-1	The General Plan Update would facilitate development visible from locally designated scenic routes; however, it would minimize impacts to scenic vistas by channeling development to existing urban communities. Proposed policies also would protect scenic vistas along locally designated scenic routes. No officially designated State Scenic Highways occur in Tuolumne County. Therefore, impacts to scenic routes and vistas would be Class III, <i>less than significant</i>.
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Future development allowed under the proposed General Plan Update could occur in areas with scenic vistas. While Tuolumne County has no designated State Scenic Highways, portions of SR 49, 108, and 120 are eligible for such designation. Furthermore, the County's existing Circulation Element and Natural Resources Element identify these roadways as locally designated scenic routes, and the updated Elements maintain these designations. As discussed above in Section 4.1.1.b (Scenic Vistas), SR 49 provides views of the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and historical sites; SR 108 traverses grassy plains, flat top buttes, foothills, and mountainous landscapes in the Stanislaus National Forest; and SR 120 overlooks Don Pedro Reservoir.

However, the General Plan Update has been formulated to reflect the preferred Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario of the Tuolumne Tomorrow Blueprint, which would channel future development within already urbanized communities and restrict development along scenic routes in rural areas. The size of each community would be limited by a locally defined urban development boundary, and infill and mixed-use would be encouraged to take advantage of existing public infrastructure and services. This land use scenario would minimize impacts to two scenic vistas designated by Caltrans on a rural section of SR 49 near the Don Pedro Reservoir. The third scenic vista designated by Caltrans in Tuolumne County, the Rim of the World overlook of the Tuolumne River, is located inside Stanislaus National Forest and would not be affected by development under the General Plan Update. Furthermore, relative to land uses under the County's existing General Plan, the proposed growth scenario would allow less greenfield development in scenic rural areas.

Although the General Plan Update would facilitate development that would be visible from locally designated scenic roadways, several elements in the General Plan Update would include policies and implementation programs to reduce adverse effects on scenic routes and vistas. The Community Identity Element in the General Plan Update includes the following policy to protect scenic views:

<i>Policy 13.A.1</i>	<i>Promote the conservation of the natural scenic quality of hillsides and hilltops surrounding defined communities.</i>
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In implementing this policy, the County would "encourage hillside development to be designed and located to be compatible with, rather than imposed on, the landscape and

environment, by minimizing the amount of grading and topographic alteration it necessitates.”

The updated Natural Resources Element includes several policies to protect scenic vistas and resources:

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| <i>Policy 4.I.2</i> | <i>Conserve the natural scenic quality and rural character along designated transportation routes in the County.</i> |
| <i>Policy 4.I.3</i> | <i>Conserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and hilltops throughout Tuolumne County.</i> |
| <i>Policy 4.I.5</i> | <i>Conserve scenic resources, landmarks and the natural landscape.</i> |
| <i>Policy 4.I.6</i> | <i>Encourage voluntary efforts to protect clusters of native trees and outstanding individual native and non-native trees which help define the character of Tuolumne County.</i> |

Implementation Program 4.I.g in the Natural Resources Element would encourage conservation of the County’s scenic resources along locally designated scenic routes by maintaining guidelines on how to integrate new development with the surrounding landscape and natural topography. These guidelines “address the retention of trees and other native vegetation which contribute to defining the County's character, screening of outdoor storage areas, landscaping and revegetation, signage, architectural design and materials, lighting and retention of landscape features that reflect the County's history and character.” In addition, Implementation Program 4.I.c would maintain guidelines which provide recommendations for integrating new construction with scenic hillsides and hilltops, by minimizing the amount of grading and topographical changes. Implementation Program 4.I.l would form a program to retain scenic vegetation “such as Heritage Trees, stands of oak woodlands, or clusters of native shrubs” that contribute to the defining the County’s character.

The updated community plans for Jamestown, Columbia, East Sonora and Tuolumne also have policies addressing scenic resources:

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| <i>Policy 14.F.1</i> | <i>Conserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and hilltops within the Jamestown community.</i> |
| <i>Policy 14.F.2</i> | <i>Protect outstanding scenic resources which contribute to the scenic quality, recreational enjoyment and rural character of the Jamestown community.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.A.8</i> | <i>Protect and improve the scenic quality along the Parrotts Ferry Road corridor as the gateway to Columbia State Historic Park.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.E.1</i> | <i>Preserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and hilltops within the Columbia community.</i> |

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| Policy 16.A.2 | <i>Conserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and vistas within the Highway 108 Bypass corridor.</i> |
| Policy 16.C.2 | <i>Protect outstanding scenic resources and viewsheds which contribute to the recreational enjoyment of the East Sonora Community and help define the character of that community.</i> |
| Policy 17.F.2 | <i>Recognize and maintain the community's natural setting as viewed from main thoroughfares and as reflected in heritage oaks, prominent ridgelines and significant peaks throughout the community.</i> |
| Policy 17.F.3 | <i>Conserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and hilltops in the Tuolumne Planning Area.</i> |

Under Implementation Program 17.F.b, the County would develop “guidelines applicable to all new development within the Tuolumne townsite to conserve heritage trees and retain significant rock outcrops and slabs, and protect the viewshed of Railroad Grade Trails.”

With adherence to existing regulations and to General Plan goals and policies, impacts related to scenic routes and vistas would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. No mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation.

Impact AES-2	The General Plan Update would promote dense growth near existing community nodes and encourage infill development, which would minimize changes to the County's predominantly rural character. Proposed policies also would protect the visual character of communities with historic buildings. Therefore, impacts would be Class III, less than significant.
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The Distinctive Communities Growth Scenario adopted by the proposed General Plan Update would minimize changes to the County's predominantly rural visual character. This blueprint for land uses in Tuolumne County, as codified in the updated land use map, would promote dense growth within communities restricted by new urban development boundaries and would encourage infill development. Infill would reduce the pressure for development that encroaches upon agricultural rangeland, thus minimizing the potential for the loss of open lands throughout the County. Rural areas of the County would continue to serve as buffers between urbanized communities with locally defined urban development boundaries.

The most substantial changes to visual character would occur within existing communities, where the updated Land Use Element would promote mixed-use and higher density residential development within urban growth boundaries, especially on vacant and underutilized sites. Build-out under the General Plan Update would result in a net increase of 5,159 dwelling units, 938,000 square feet of commercial development, and 196,000 square feet of industrial

development above existing conditions (year 2015). This represents a 24 percent increase in dwelling units, 20 percent increase in commercial development, 11 percent increase in industrial development, and less than one percent increase in public lands above existing conditions. Urban development could result in an increase in the height of buildings and the introduction of modern architectural styles. The intensification of land use anticipated to occur in urban areas may be considered an adverse effect to some viewers due to the presence of larger buildings and the corresponding reduction in vacant land within the County. However, as detailed below, policies in the General Plan Update would encourage new development to be compatible with the scale and character of existing development and would enhance the distinct visual identities of communities. Other policies would protect historic sites and their surroundings, which are a signature aspect of the visual character of Tuolumne County's unincorporated communities.

The updated Community Identity Element includes the following policies, the implementation of which would reduce potential impacts to the visual character across Tuolumne County:

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| <i>Policy 13.A.3</i> | <i>Maintain existing and create new buffer areas between defined communities through the use of agricultural lands, timberlands, open areas, rural density development, clustering of land use, and recreational uses.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.A.4</i> | <i>Discourage strip development along the County's arterials connecting communities.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.A.5</i> | <i>Encourage the efforts of individual communities which desire to promote the compatibility of new development with the architectural types or natural setting at the entrances to and within their respective communities.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.A.6</i> | <i>Encourage cluster development to promote the retention of open areas.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.A.7</i> | <i>Require new development at the entrances to rural communities to include elements such as signage, landscaping and appropriate architectural detailing to help establish and maintain distinct identities for such communities.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.B.7</i> | <i>Encourage new development to be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area. Structures, especially those outside defined communities and urban and commercial centers, should be designed and located so that:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>a. The structures themselves do not silhouette against the sky above ridgelines or hilltops; landscaping could be used as a buffer around the structure.</i><i>b. Rooflines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline.</i><i>c. They fit the natural terrain.</i> |

- d. They utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape and avoid high contrasts.*

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| <i>Policy 13.C.4</i> | <i>Promote the preservation of and discourage substantial alteration to historically or architecturally significant buildings which serve as focal points of community design.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.C.7</i> | <i>Encourage new development to be designed in an architectural style which is aesthetically appealing and blends into the architectural character of the individual community.</i> |
| <i>Policy 13.C.8</i> | <i>Encourage landscaping around parking lots to provide screening by retaining or replanting native vegetation and/or through the use of topography or other natural features and require landscaping to enhance new commercial and industrial development.</i> |

The updated Land Use Element includes the following policies, the implementation of which would reduce potential impacts to the visual character in the County:

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| <i>Policy 1.A.7</i> | <i>Encourage open areas, green belts, community parks and other gathering places within and around defined communities.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.E.4</i> | <i>Encourage new residential development to be designed to reflect and consider natural features, visibility of structures and the relationship of the development to surrounding land uses.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.F.4</i> | <i>Require new commercial development to be designed to minimize the visual impact of parking areas on public transportation routes and on surrounding viewsheds.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.F.5</i> | <i>Promote new commercial development in rural communities that provides for the immediate needs of the local residents and services to tourists. The scale and character of such commercial development should be compatible with and complement the surrounding area.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.F.6</i> | <i>Encourage new commercial development in historic communities to be designed to be compatible with the scale and architectural style of the historic buildings.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.F.7</i> | <i>Maintain a consistent building setback for commercial development on all street frontages in historic communities to reflect the historic "Main Street" character and ambiance.</i> |
| <i>Policy 1.G.6</i> | <i>Encourage new industrial development to be designed to minimize the visual impact of parking areas on public transportation routes and on surrounding viewsheds.</i> |

Policy 1.G.7 Encourage new industrial development in or immediately adjacent to historic communities to be designed to be compatible with the scale and architectural style of the historic buildings.

The updated Natural Resources Element has the following policies to conserve the visual character of designated scenic routes, protect the historic character of communities, and improve the visual quality of the County:

Policy 4.I.2 Conserve the natural scenic quality and rural character along designated transportation routes in the County.

Policy 4.I.4 Support the efforts of individual communities which desire to promote the compatibility of new development with their historical character.

Policy 4.I.7 Regulate signs in terms of size, location, height, construction, general appearance and safety in the County in order to improve the visual attractiveness and appeal of the County

Consistent with Policy 4.I.4, Implementation Program 4.I.d would support the efforts of communities which desire to promote compatibility of new development with their historical character through the development of design guidelines or other means. Five communities – Columbia, Jamestown, Tuolumne, Twain Harte, and East Sonora – also have existing design guidelines that are intended to conserve the County’s rural character, scenic built environment, natural environment, and cultural resources. For future discretionary entitlements in these communities, County staff would implement design review on a project-by-project basis.

The updated Jamestown Community Plan has the following policies addressing visual character:

Policy 14.A.1 Maintain the existing rural character of the Jamestown Community by preserving the mixture of urban and non-urban land uses found in the area.

Policy 14.A.3 Encourage all new development in the Design Review and Historic Design Preservation Districts and along the State Highway 49/108 corridor to be designed in a manner that is compatible with Jamestown’s historic character.

Policy 14.A.4 Require new development to utilize landscaping for aesthetic and functional purposes.

Policy 14.A.5 Require new development within the Design Review District to comply with the Jamestown Design Guidelines to preserve the historic character of Jamestown.

Policy 14.D.3 Discourage the spread of strip commercial development along State Highway 49/108.

The updated Columbia Community Plan has the following policies addressing visual character:

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| <i>Policy 15.A.1</i> | <i>Retain the historic Gold Rush character of the Columbia community.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.A.2</i> | <i>Maintain the rural, small-town atmosphere of the Columbia area by preserving a mixture of urban and non-urban land uses found in the area.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.A.5</i> | <i>Encourage new development to be designed in a manner that is compatible with Columbia's historic architectural heritage.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.A.6</i> | <i>Require new development within the Design Review area that is subject to a discretionary entitlement to comply with the Columbia Design Guide to preserve the historic character of Columbia.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.E.2</i> | <i>Protect outstanding scenic and historic resources which contribute to the visual quality and rural character of the Columbia community.</i> |
| <i>Policy 15.E.8</i> | <i>Encourage protection of vegetation noteworthy within the Columbia area, such as stands of mature ponderosa and sugar pine trees.</i> |

The updated East Sonora Community Plan has the following goals and policies addressing visual character:

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| <i>Goal 16.A</i> | <i>Maintain a bypass route along the Highway 108 corridor that will maintain the rural setting while allowing for the sensitive integration of community identification signage and residential development.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.A.1</i> | <i>Continue to implement the East Sonora Design Guidelines to preserve the rural character of the Bypass route.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.A.6</i> | <i>Maintain rural and natural qualities of the outlying East Sonora Community through the use of native tree species for landscaping and preservation of blocks of native vegetation, with emphasis along main circulation corridors.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.B.3</i> | <i>Discourage the spread of strip commercial development along Mono Way, east of Cavalieri Road, and Tuolumne Road, east of Wards Ferry Road.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.B.5</i> | <i>Encourage landscaping and public art focusing on the aesthetics of East Sonora.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.C.3</i> | <i>Encourage new development to capitalize on the use of native vegetation for aesthetic and functional purposes.</i> |
| <i>Policy 16.D.3</i> | <i>Encourage the use of native vegetation and natural topography in the design of residential developments. Hillside construction should nestle in among trees and use an architectural design to blend with the environment.</i> |

The updated Tuolumne Community Plan has the following goals and policies addressing visual character:



Goal 17.A	<i>Retain and revitalize the Tuolumne Planning Area's rural, small-town community character and company-town atmosphere.</i>
Policy 17.A.2	<i>Promote a sense of association between new developments and the Tuolumne Townsite through the use of common design themes (e.g., tree-lined streets, lighting fixtures, sign design), connecting non-motorized transportation facilities, connecting roadways, and similar design elements.</i>
Policy 17.B.8	<i>Discourage new land uses that detract from the small-town community character of the Tuolumne Planning Area.</i>
Goal 17.C	<i>Maintain a mix of housing densities consistent with company-town character and the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design.</i>
Goal 17.D	<i>Maintain the Tuolumne Planning Area's small-town, rural community character and unique design reflecting its lumber, mining and railroad heritage.</i>
Policy 17.D.5	<i>Encourage lighting design reflecting the community's historic character, natural setting and small-town scale and discourage proliferation of modern shiny-metallic, nondescript lighting reminiscent of urban areas.</i>
Policy 17.D.7	<i>Encourage gateway and prominent intersection design that reflects small-town community character.</i>
Policy 17.E.17	<i>Retain the wide, tree-lined streets characteristic of the Tuolumne Townsite.</i>
Policy 17.E.18	<i>Reflect the existing character of the community in the design of future transportation facilities.</i>
Policy 17.F.4	<i>Encourage the retention of agricultural land both as an important resource and an essential element of the community's rural character.</i>
Policy 17.I.6	<i>Encourage new development within the Tuolumne Planning Area to be designed in a manner that is compatible with Tuolumne's historic character.</i>

Because development facilitated by the General Plan Update and Community Plans would protect existing agricultural and open lands, while largely maintaining and enhancing the visual character of urban communities compared to existing conditions, impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. No mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation, since the proposed General Plan Update includes a policy framework that would address potential visual impacts at a programmatic level.

Impact AES-3 The General Plan Update would facilitate development that would introduce new sources of light and glare, which



would increase overall ambient night-time light and daytime glare from building materials. Although proposed dark sky standards for the communities of Tuolumne and Jamestown would minimize light spillover and glare in those planning areas, the General Plan Update does not include standards for light and glare in other unincorporated areas. Impacts to existing development would be Class II, *significant but mitigable*.

The General Plan Update would facilitate development that would increase the ambient nighttime lighting within unincorporated areas of the County. Areas that would experience the greatest potential for increased lighting are those areas likely to experience the greatest development potential, which are the four updated community plan areas. It is anticipated that buildout of the General Plan Update would result in a net increase of 5,159 dwelling units, 938,000 square feet of commercial development, and 196,000 square feet of industrial development above existing conditions (year 2015). New residential, mixed-use, and other types of development would generate increased lighting and glare, especially within the new urban growth boundaries where future development would be concentrated.

By restricting growth outside of urban development boundaries, the General Plan Update would reduce the amount of new light and glare in rural areas that have relatively dark nighttime skies. Proposed policies and implementation programs also would minimize these impacts. In the updated Community Identity Element, Implementation Program 13.C.d calls for the County to work with those communities that wish to development design guidelines for new development, which should address lighting among other aesthetic considerations. In the community of Tuolumne, Policy 17.D.6 would “encourage lighting design and scale that incorporates dark sky standards, minimizing and avoiding light pollution throughout the Tuolumne Planning Area.” To implement this policy, the Design Guide for the Tuolumne Planning Area would be amended to include the following features:

- A unified design for light fixtures that incorporates dark sky standards;
- New guidelines that incorporate dark sky standards for minimizing and/or avoiding light pollution for new development; and
- New guidelines for outdoor lighting that would protect the ability to view the night sky by regulating unnecessary upward light projection.

In the community of Jamestown, Implementation Measure 14.A.g would maintain lighting standards to prevent “unnecessary light intensity, direct glare or light trespass” and regulate upward light project to protect views of the night sky. Nevertheless, outside of these specific provisions for the communities of Tuolumne and Jamestown, the General Plan Update does not include any specific goals, policies, or implementation programs to minimize light and glare impacts across the County. Impacts would be significant but mitigable.

Mitigation Measures. The following measure shall be incorporated as a county-wide General Plan policy in the updated Community Identity Element to reduce light and glare impacts to less than significant levels:

AES-3

Policy 13.C.12: Minimize Light and Glare. Preserve the existing nighttime environment by limiting the illumination of areas surrounding new development. New lighting that is part of residential, commercial, industrial, or recreational development shall be oriented away from off-site sensitive uses, and should be hooded, shielded, and located to direct light pools downward and prevent glare.

Significance after Mitigation. Implementation of the proposed policy would reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

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